

The International Corner

What's New in Portugal

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Since the 1970's, Portugal has had a high number of working women. According to OECD data, in Portugal and the northern European countries, there is a positive correlation for women between having children and working outside of the home. Today, 68% of women work and only 16% have part-time jobs. These families face added problems in achieving work-life balance.

Data gathered from companies in the banking, health, telecommunications, and retail sectors in the Quality of Life in a Changing Europe project (<http://www.projectquality.org/>) show that:

- 67% of the respondents work more than 40 hours a week
- 63% report that work interferes to a “medium” or “high” extent with their family life
- 42% often or always feel work-related stress
- 34% demonstrate low satisfaction with their work-family balance
- supervisors and those working the most hours are the least satisfied with their work-family balance
- levels of subjective well-being are high for those satisfied with their work-family balance

Concerns about work-family balance have been growing in Portugal in recent years, and were placed in the spotlight by recent measures by José Sócrates' government. This legislature has made amendments to the labour code as well as to corporate social responsibility policies at state-owned companies. Amendments to the labour code, which will come into force in 2009, extend parental and paternity leave, thereby making it easier to reconcile the birth of children with a job. These amendments may encourage more involvement of fathers from the early days of a child's life:

- The father of a newborn has mandatory leave of 10 days with 100% pay and another 10 voluntary days, also with 100% pay.

- The usual four months' parental leave with 100% pay for the working mother or father may go up to five months, also fully-paid, if at least one month is taken exclusively by each parent.
- If working parents choose, they may draw 83% of their regular pay and extend their parental leave to six months.
- Each parent is also entitled to another three months' parental leave with 25% pay.

As of 2009, state-owned companies are obliged to develop social responsibility and corporate governance policies that promote gender equality and work-family balance. A 2008 Council of Ministers resolution obliges companies with state capital to conduct social audits and, using the results, define annual plans for measures aimed at work-family balance and equality between men and women, within the framework of corporate social responsibility action. These policies fall within the Third National Equality and Citizenship Plan to be developed by 2013 under the supervision of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

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